Psychological Safety
Survey Design
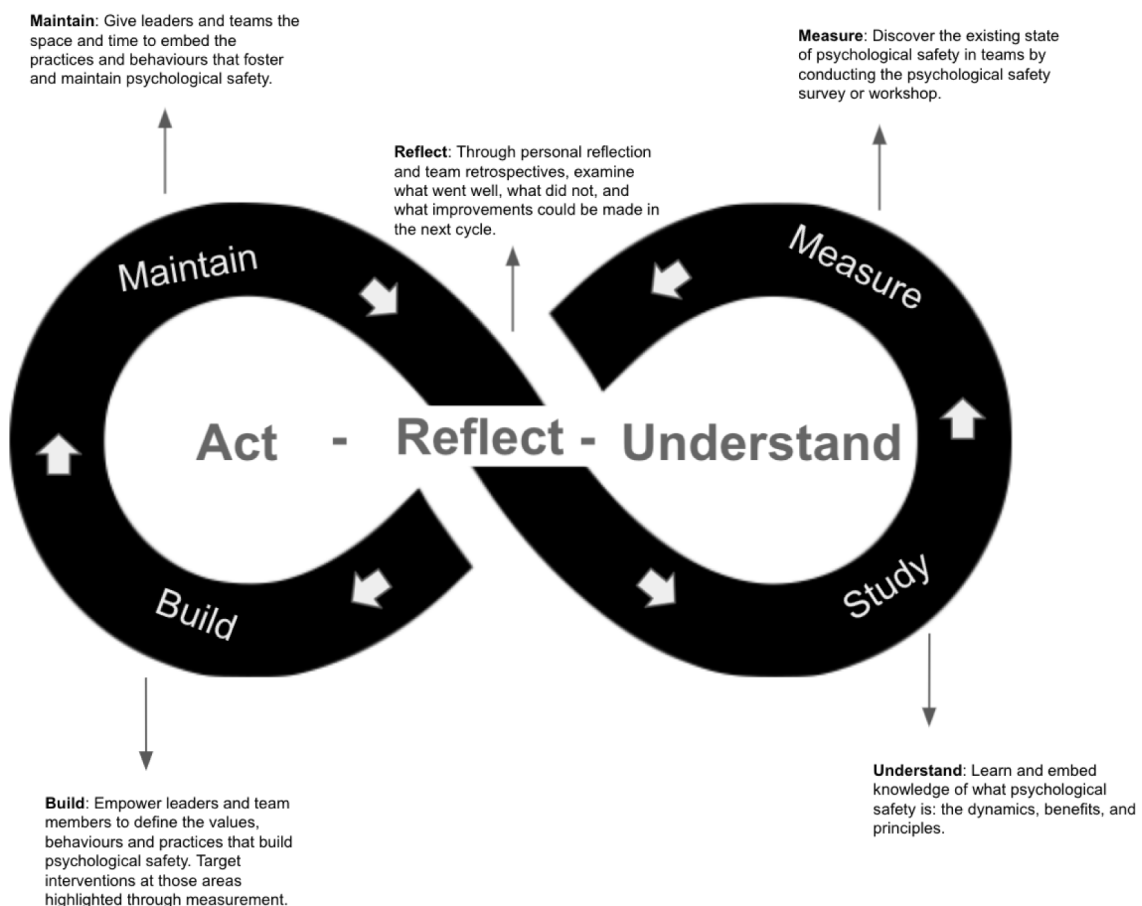
2023

Rationale

By surveying psychological safety, you're doing four powerful things —

1. Surfacing any issues that are impacting psychological safety,
2. Educating people about what psychological safety is,
3. Making psychological safety safe to talk about, and
4. Most importantly of all, making explicit and encouraging the very behaviours that increase psychological safety!

Measuring psychological safety forms part of an iterative process to enhance and improve team performance. It is crucial that the survey is not seen as an end in itself, and that it is used to inform changes to practise moving forwards.The diagram below shows how measurement fits into a continual improvement cycle which also includes opportunities to act and reflect on practices.

Maintain: Give leaders and teams the space and time to embed the practices and behaviours that foster and maintain psychological safety.

Reflect: Through personal reflection and team retrospectives, examine what went well, what did not, and what improvements could be made in the next cycle.

Measure: Discover the existing state of psychological safety in teams by conducting the psychological safety survey or workshop.

Maintain

Measure

Act - Reflect - Understand

Build

Study

Build: Empower leaders and team members to define the values, behaviours and practices that build psychological safety. Target interventions at those areas highlighted through measurement.

Understand: Learn and embed knowledge of what psychological safety is: the dynamics, benefits, and principles.

Survey tool

It is key that the language and terminology we use in the survey tool makes sense in your context. This way we can gain the best understanding of team cultures and practices which are impacting psychological safety and make the most relevant recommendations.

We suggest **selecting around 7 of the statements below** which are particularly relevant to your workplace and teams. There may be other specific questions that you wish to include.

Ensure that you consider factors such as the native language of the people responding to the survey, any relevant domain-specific language (for example, people in aviation may use the term "debrief" whilst in technology, people may use "retrospective"), alongside accessibility concerns such as folks who are dyslexic, neurodiverse, partially sighted. Be aware also of how people in your organisation work - are they at desks, or on site and using mobile devices?

The key point is to ensure that you choose the language, statements, and practices that have the most meaning for your teams and context.

Once chosen, we will invite individuals to **score agreement with the statements** using a 5 point Likert scale 1 from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.

Expectations
1. On this team, I understand what is expected of me.
2. On this team, I have a good understanding of whether I am meeting expectations.

Authenticity and feeling valued
3. I feel able to be myself at work.
4. I feel my ideas are valued, and I feel safe in suggesting them.
5. My team members welcome my ideas and give them time and attention.
6. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised.

Support
7. It is easy for me to ask other members of this team for help.
8. It is easy for me to ask questions when I don't understand something.
9. I feel able to bring up problems and concerns.
10. I feel safe to respectfully disagree with colleagues.

Inclusion
11. Members of this team never reject others for being different and nobody is left out.
12. Nobody on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.

Learning from failure

13. If I make a mistake on this team, it is never held against me.
14. I feel able to admit mistakes and share learning from them with colleagues.
15. In this team, people discuss their mistakes and share learning from them.
16. When something goes wrong, we work together to find the systemic causes.
17. We take time to find new ways to improve our team's processes.

Taking risks

18. It is safe for me to take an intelligent risk on this team.
19. I feel able to discuss taking intelligent risks with my colleagues.

Note

You may wish to consider surveying anonymously – if individuals are feeling psychologically unsafe, they will be more likely to be honest if the survey is anonymous. If they feel psychologically safe, then it won't matter if the survey is anonymous or not.

Be conscious of asking for departmental information as this could compromise the anonymity of the survey, particularly for smaller sample sizes.

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